

VZCZCXRO1654
RR RUEHLMC
DE RUEHBP #0055 0181609
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 181609Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6732
INFO RUEHLMC/MCC WASHINGTON DC 0024

UNCLAS BAMAKO 000055

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EFIN](#) [ECON](#) [ML](#)

SUBJECT: THE WRONG PEOPLE DO THE RIGHT THING: ELECTORAL
CODE OF CONDUCT SIGNED

¶1. All of Mali's major political parties were among thirty-four signatories in a ceremony January 11 to inaugurate an electoral "Code of Conduct." The code was developed in conjunction with the National Democratic Institute and a Dutch NGO in advance of Mali's 2007 Presidential and Legislative elections, and bind signatories to promote a free, fair, and transparent electoral process. Participating alongside the political parties were Government entities, including the National Electoral Commission (CENI), the Commission for Equal Access to the Media (CNEAME) and the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MATCL), the ministry responsible for administering elections.

¶2. Highlights among the Code's 44 provisions are pledges not to make personal attacks, buy votes, or purchase and distribute campaign T-shirts and related clothing. Violations of the code "will expose the authors to the public denunciation" of the CENI, the CNEAME, and MATCL. NGO and party activists praised the code as a significant step in promoting a peaceful electoral process and strengthening civil democratic discourse in Mali.

¶3. The cloud surrounding the silver lining is that two of the three expected presidential candidates, including the incumbent, are likely to run as independents, and are thus not bound by the code. President Toure is not expected to sign it himself, and, for example, could claim that T-shirts and other more expensive campaign gifts were procured and distributed without his direct involvement. Soumeylou Boubey Maiga's situation is a bit more complicated: he will run as an independent under the rubric of "Convergence 2007" while trying to maintain his membership in ADEMA, Mali's largest political party. ADEMA signed the code, but ADEMA leaders are maneuvering to expel Maiga from the party for his failure to adhere to their decision to support ATT. Whether they succeed or not, as an independent candidate Maiga appears to be under no obligation to honor ADEMA's pledge.

¶4. COMMENT: The intent of the code is noble, but will likely get obscured, if not lost completely, in the reality of Malian politics. It would be a refreshing change to see one of Africa's poorest countries avoid the t-shirts and other expenses typical of a political campaign, but considering the lively campaign already engaging Malians, we still expect to see President Toure's face on t-shirts in April - and despite the code's prohibition on personal attacks, we expect Mali's vibrant and vocal political activists to have something to say about it.

MCCULLEY